

# Louisiana Recovery Initiatives

## November 2005

*In October 2005, Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco created the Louisiana Recovery Authority, a 23-member panel dedicated to identifying, coordinating and implementing the short- and long-term issues of the recovery. She committed to an ambitious agenda that included the achievement of 7, 30- and 100-day goals and employed cross-agency collaborations to solve specific recovery challenges.*

*Even before the inception of the LRA, Louisiana governmental agencies had made significant progress in addressing the needs of the people impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. What follows are some examples of their efforts.*

## CREATING JOBS AND A STRONGER ECONOMY

### LOUISIANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

#### Louisiana Bridge Loan Program

- Providing up to \$25,000, interest-free bridge loans for small businesses in 13 most severely affected parishes; coordinating funding through banks backed by state/federal resources
- Loans will be repaid from SBA, insurance or other sources
- 467 applications had been approved as of November 3rd, totaling \$8.8 million for Louisiana businesses

#### Business Assistance Centers

- Providing business owners in affected areas with direct assistance and information resources regarding business planning and long-term sustainability
- Staffed by local economic development professionals, Small Business Administration and Small Business Development Center staff, local chambers of commerce, state agencies and volunteer business consultants
- Locations open in Baton Rouge, Covington, Houma, Lake Charles, Metairie and New Orleans

#### LED Workforce Housing Initiative

- Working with FEMA to coordinate the delivery of mobile housing units for temporary employee housing
- As of October 27th, LED coordinated the delivery of 4,900 mobile housing units

#### AccessLouisiana.com & LEDforward.louisiana.gov

- AccessLouisiana.com: connecting qualified businesses & contractors with available contracting & sub-contracting opportunities; Enabling businesses & contractors to register their capabilities for sub-contracting opportunities online
- LEDforward.louisiana.gov: nationally targeted print advertising campaign; professionally Staffed Call Center: Toll-free number 866-310-7617

#### Leveraging Federal Relationships

- Directing FEMA prime contractors to qualified Louisiana businesses for FEMA contracting opportunities
- Working with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to restore business and investor confidence; Louisiana earned a \$4 million EDA grant for technical assistance and capacity building, which is being used to fund the Business Assistance Centers
- Working with the Small Business Administration to raise limits on low interest business loans; lower loan requirement thresholds for impacted businesses; and increase local loan production

#### Core Incentive Programs

- *Louisiana: Vision 2020* remains the state's blueprint for economic development
- LED continues to operate the core incentive programs that local developers and LED relies on for business retention and recruitment

# **CREATING A STRONGER EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR OUR CHILDREN**

## *LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION INITIATIVES*

### **Helping Schools Help Children**

- Established a “buddy” system—each school district in the state was assigned a specific DOE cabinet member to work around the clock on the challenges of 186,000 displaced students
- Providing office space and website space for all displaced school districts
- Established an office for the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the DOE building for quick access by school districts
- Provided school districts that have received displaced students with student information and transcripts to coordinate the placement of students
- Requested and received temporary waivers on class size, instructional days, health screenings, and high stakes portion of LEAP tests
  - All waivers are temporary, lasting just one year
- Applied for, and received, grants to expand charter schools and provide mental health counseling in schools
- Established the MFP Task Force to rework the state funding of schools, will require legislative approval
- Working with Congress on legislation to fund schools with displaced students and supplement the income or unemployment benefits of displaced teachers

### **Helping Teachers, Parents & Students**

- Expanded call-center hours to teachers & parents to answer questions about certificates, school records etc.
  - At the height of the emergency, the call center answered more than 21,000 phone calls
- Aligning standards so students taking shelter out of state can still receive a Louisiana diploma
- Waived fees for student information and teacher certificates
  - As of November 8<sup>th</sup>, DOE had provided more than 2,000 certificates for teachers
- Established a walk-in teacher certification office to provide duplicate certificates, certification assistance, relief information and computer access to displaced teachers
- Provided free adult education classes and GED tests to displaced citizens in Louisiana shelters
- DOE secured a \$2.5 million grant from the Bell South Foundation to expand course offerings through Louisiana Virtual Schools
  - The Louisiana Virtual Schools program is already operating throughout the state, and this grant will help secure access to an expanded course list for even more students than before

# CREATING A STRONGER EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR OUR CHILDREN

## *BOARD OF REGENTS INITIATIVES*

### **Student Access Measures**

- Louisiana's postsecondary education systems, led by the Board of Regents, agreed on a provision to allow displaced students from any affected institution to enroll at any other Louisiana public institution without paying additional tuition and mandatory attendance fees
  - Accommodations would be made for TOPS students and other state financial aid
  - This agreement was reached within 48 hours after Katrina made landfall
  - Displaced students were urged to take advantage of electronically available courses and contact their institutions to explore off-campus course opportunities
- Offering displaced students opportunities to continue education at no cost
  - Regents is working with Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and the Sloan Consortium, an international association of colleges and universities committed to online education
  - \$1.1 million grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation provides a wide range of courses to serve students at the community college, university and graduate levels, regardless of academic discipline
  - Several Louisiana universities and colleges have also developed new "mini-semesters" to accommodate displaced students

### **Direct Disaster-Response Measures**

- Regents coordinated higher education efforts with operations at the state Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness in marshalling resources to address various emergency response needs
  - Systems and institutions provided shelter facilities & support to FEMA, Red Cross and others
  - Emergency shelters on campuses housed as many as 10,000 evacuees
- Higher education institution-owned land has been utilized and continues to be assessed for use in the establishment of interim housing facilities

### **Agency Cost Savings Measures**

- Higher education officials, in negotiations with the Division of Administration, designed a target savings proposal of \$25 million in savings for the state to gain a release from Executive Order KBB2005-38 (hiring and spending freeze)
- The request was granted and cost savings actions are being undertaken

### **Research Infrastructure Measures**

- Activities and official creation of the Post-Katrina/Rita STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Task Force
  - Regents has approved the official establishment of the Post Katrina/Rita Research (and Related Infrastructure) Task Force
  - The Task Force, which has been functioning informally since shortly after Hurricane Katrina, will advise Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie and the Board of Regents on recovery policy decisions related to research in the so-called "STEM" disciplines (science, technology, engineering and mathematics)

# **HELPING LOUISIANA FAMILIES RECOVER**

## *DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES INITIATIVES*

### **Hurricane Response Initiatives**

- Established a toll-free number (888-LAHELPU) to assist citizens seeking human and social service information to help them cope with the disasters
- Assisting the Governor's Office & FEMA in obtaining temporary housing for displaced citizens
  - Full-time staff members are located at the Joint Field Operations Center to carry out this task

### **Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS)**

- Connecting with displaced consumers with disabilities
  - Initiated on October 27, in collaboration with the Department of Labor (DOL)
  - LRS & DOL staff act as system navigators assisting displaced residents
  - LRS staff from New Orleans who are displaced have been assigned to use whatever resources available to locate displaced consumers in and out of state
  - LRS is also collaborating with other state vocational rehabilitation programs across the country, to help the transition of the consumers' case records to their state if applicable; or working with the other vocational rehabilitation programs to serve our consumers if they plan to return to our state
- Secured a Special Waiver on State General Funds
  - Congress successfully passed HR 3864 - Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Affected by Hurricane Katrina or Rita Act of 2005
  - LRS worked with the Department of Education and the other states affected by the hurricanes (Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas)
  - Waiver on state general funds for the federal allotment for FFY 2005

### **Office of Family Support (OFS)**

- Disaster Food Stamp Program
  - Special waiver obtained from the federal government; citizens began receiving benefits within four days of Katrina's landfall
  - Staff processed disaster applications on a 24-hour basis for a one-week period
  - Outreach for the emergency food stamp program included offering mobile units, setting up temporary offices and recruiting staff from throughout the state & other departments to assist
  - 1.28 million citizens (511,000 households) have received more than \$286 million in Disaster Food Stamp Benefits
  - This is an average of \$518 per household
- Louisiana Family Recovery Corps
  - OFS has designated \$32 million of TANF funds for the Louisiana Family Recovery Corps
  - Louisiana Family Recovery Corps is a comprehensive human services response initiative

### **Office of Community Services (OCS)**

- Reuniting Children with their Families
  - OCS staff have conducted an intense effort to locate all missing children, including bringing in staff from around the state and working with National Center for Missing & Exploited Children
  - Of the 1,838 children in foster care from the impacted areas, 8 remain missing
  - OCS also located 38 children who were separated from their families following Katrina and reunited them with an adult
- Protecting Children
  - OCS child protection workers have visited shelters to interview caretakers suspected of abuse and/or neglect

## **PROVIDING QUALITY MEDICAL CARE, KEEPING LOUISIANA HEALTHY**

### *DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HOSPITALS INITIATIVES*

#### **Medicaid**

- Staff from the Louisiana Medicaid program continues to work in shelters, FEMA Family Assistance Centers, at local Medicaid offices and by manning a toll-free hotline after hours and on weekends to enroll families impacted by the storm in the Medicaid program and assist those displaced evacuees who were already enrolled in Medicaid to access services
- DHH created a new Medicaid application to address the current living conditions of displaced Louisiana residents by accepting self-declarations for residency, income, assets, and medical bills
- Medicaid also simplified and sped up the process for enrolling out-of-state providers to expedite the care of patients who had evacuated to other states
- Certain service limits and requirements for prior authorization, referrals, etc. were temporarily lifted in order to assist persons eligible for Medicaid who were impacted by the storm to access needed care
- To maintain the Louisiana Medicaid Program, the State has made a federal request for \$1.7 billion

#### **Katrinahealth.org**

- This Web-based tool allowed medical providers to access the prescription drug history of evacuees
- Through this service medical professionals volunteering in the recovery effort could obtain all available patient allergy information and other alerts to maintain patient care, even in the worst circumstances, that guaranteed safety
- Provided through partnerships with the American Medical Association, the National Community Pharmacists Association and the National Association of Chain Drug Stores

#### **Expansion of the Health Alert Network (HAN)**

- DHH had developed and implemented a tracking system for unusual diseases or outbreaks in general populations or hospitals
- In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, this tracking system was expanded to include general shelters, special needs shelters, field hospitals and emergency rooms
- Fortunately, there was no outbreak of deadly disease after the hurricane, but this network allowed DHH to monitor symptoms and health trends across the state

#### **LINKS System Expansion**

- For the past three years, DHH has worked to get every child entered into the LINKS system, which tracks children's immunization status
- Using the LINKS system, DHH was able to track the immunization status of the children in shelters to find out who was lacking necessary immunizations and then vaccinate them accordingly
- Since people living in close quarters such as shelters are at a higher risk for contagious diseases, this information was crucial in preventing the spread of disease

#### **Regional Response Teams**

- After evacuating from the hurricanes, many residents were displaced and could not access necessary social services such as counseling, substance abuse treatment or therapeutic services for people with developmental disabilities
- To address these needs, DHH established two regional response teams in all parts of the state that housed evacuees to connect people immediately to the services they needed
- The teams, comprised of a social worker, psychiatric worker, addictions counselor and registered nurse, referred people recovering from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina to services in the region where they were currently residing so they could receive treatment
- The teams also offered on-site counseling

**PROVIDING QUALITY MEDICAL CARE, KEEPING LOUISIANA HEALTHY**  
*DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HOSPITALS INITIATIVES*  
*CONTINUED*

**Dispatching Sanitarian Teams**

- Normally, sanitarians within the DHH Office of Public Health (OPH) are responsible for inspecting retail food establishments and other public places to ensure compliance with the state sanitary code
- After the hurricanes, this need existed on a much greater scale
- DHH/OPH sanitarians, along with a team of other agencies, inspected hundreds of retail food establishments, businesses and schools each day to ensure public health
- DHH/OPH team also developed a placard for establishments that had been cleared to reopen to hang in their storefronts so customers would know immediately if they had been cleared to reopen

**Mental Health Needs**

- DHH Office of Mental health provided crisis counseling for disaster response staff and also expanded the hours at Community Mental Health Centers statewide to meet the increased demand for counseling services after the hurricanes

**Health Care Needs Assessment**

- The DHH Bureau of Primary Care and Rural Health is conducting this assessment to determine the health care needs of the shifted population in state
- The Bureau also will identify publicly funded health care services and their operational status in each area of the state and will work to match displaced residents and displaced medical personnel with care and employment options

**[www.DHHemergencynews.com](http://www.DHHemergencynews.com)**

- DHH developed and expanded this Web site as a one-stop site where citizens could go to get all available DHH information on hurricane recovery

**DEVELOPING LOUISIANA'S WORKFORCE**  
*LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR INITIATIVES*

**\$62 Million National Emergency Grant Initiatives**

- As of November 8<sup>th</sup>, Louisiana Department of Labor (LDOL) had received \$26 million of the \$62 million grant from the US Department of Labor
- The \$26 million has been used to hire about 4,000 people in temporary jobs in the communities affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita
- Jobs include working in evacuation centers, cleaning up debris and assisting with humanitarian efforts

**Unemployment Insurance Payments**

- LDOL is using Debit Cards to get unemployment insurance payments to more than 258,000 people
  - The Debit Cards allow the recipients more flexibility than payment by check
  - As of Oct. 28, the Labor Department has paid \$292.7 million in unemployment and disaster assistance by using the Debit Cards and direct deposit
  - More than 310,000 people are receiving jobless benefits as a result of Katrina & Rita

*LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR INITIATIVES*  
*CONTINUED*

**LA Swift**

- Under the leadership of the Louisiana Recovery Authority, LDOL and Department of Transportation & Development initiated a 15-day pilot bus program LA Swift
  - LA Swift is designed to transport displaced residents with no transportation from Baton Rouge to New Orleans and back for work, job fairs and similar recovery efforts
  - LA Swift is funded by FEMA and is possible through the cooperation of the Capital Area Transit System and the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority
  - Up to 25 buses and drivers are available for the service
  - As of November 9, more than 2,300 commuters were transported through this service

**Other Initiatives**

- LDOL is using a \$3 million USDOL grant to train about 1,300 people for high-growth, high-demand jobs in occupations such as construction and health care
- LDOL has added several Call Centers in Baton Rouge and in other states to take the unprecedented number of calls from UI claimants. The department is continuing to add capacity for taking calls
- LDOL has hired 24 temporary Reintegration Counselors through a \$2.5 million grant funded by the USDOL Employment and Training Administration to provide employment assistance and counseling to individuals who have been displaced and dislocated by hurricanes Katrina and Rita
- LDOL is hosting job fairs to assist citizens who lost their jobs due to the hurricanes
  - More than 350 people attended a hospitality industry job fair in New Orleans on November 8

**RECLAIMING LOUISIANA AS THE SPORTSMAN'S PARADISE**  
*LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE & FISHERIES INITIATIVES*

**Office of Fisheries**

- Marine Fisheries Sampling Program
  - Reinstated in all major bay systems at accessible stations
  - Shrimp, crab, finfish and oyster data are available from across the coast
- Artificial Reef Program
  - Marine Fisheries Division's Artificial Reef Program is studying the feasibility of converting oil and gas platforms that were destroyed by the hurricanes (and that meet the program's environmental criteria) into artificial reefs for fish habitat
- Mapping of Public Oyster Seed Grounds
  - Marine Fisheries Division staff is working with St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parish officials to utilize licensed commercial oyster harvesters from those areas to perform mapping of the public oyster seed grounds in those parishes
  - The mapping information will be a valuable asset to future oyster management activities on the public oyster grounds, helping identify suitable areas for the development of new oyster reefs
- Freshwater Fisheries Recovery Efforts
  - Inland Fisheries Division is working with Bass Anglers Sportsmen Society and the Fish America Foundation to assist in the state's freshwater fisheries recovery efforts
- Federal Waiver
  - Inland Fisheries Division has requested a waiver from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the normal formula for apportionment on the Sportsfish Restoration Account

*LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE & FISHERIES INITIATIVES*  
*CONTINUED*

**Office of Wildlife**

- Alligator season extended
  - Alligator season was extended (2 weeks) to Oct. 30th
  - To allow hunters – whose season was interrupted by the hurricanes – to harvest alligators and salvage some of their season
  - The division also offered no charge replacement of alligator tags to hunters who had lost same in either storm
- Accelerated Habitat Assessments
  - The division accelerated habitat assessments in storm damaged areas to reopen hunting seasons that were temporarily closed by storm damage/flooding

**Licensing**

- DWLF Licensing Section continues to offer boat owners documentation assistance (free certified copies of boat registrations) for lost, stolen or missing boats (for insurance claims purposes)
- DWLF Licensing Section is making duplicate commercial licenses available to commercial fishing business operators (admin. fee of \$5 per license waived) who lost licenses in the storms

**Seafood Promotion & Marketing Board**

- Seafood Prom. & Marketing Board: Helping workers/families/business owners in the Gulf Coast and Louisiana seafood industry reconnect via a message board on [www.LouisianaSeafood.com](http://www.LouisianaSeafood.com)

**HELPING LOUISIANA RECOVER**  
*DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE INITIATIVES*

**Return & Remittances**

- DOR implemented extensions of time to file returns and pay taxes due August 30th through September 30th
  - Will re-evaluate additional extensions for severely impacted areas
  - During this period penalty will not accrue and it's our intention to waive interest pursuant to Act 454 of the 2005 Regular Legislative Session

**Refunds**

- DOR relaxed business rules associated with tax refunds but not at the expense of safeguarding public funds. Expedited tax refunds by decentralizing issuance/re-issuance to regional offices
- DOR is attempting to identify outstanding returns with overpayments for businesses located in the most impacted areas and issue refunds
- DOR expanded utilization of direct deposit for all refunds by including businesses and individuals that did not file electronically

**Compliance**

- DOR suspended compliance activities (audits, notices, liens, levies, refund offsets, etc.) for 60 days
  - Will re-evaluate additional delay for severely impacted areas

**Exemption**

- DOR clarified definition of “transient” to exclude persons from the impacted areas from the assessment of the hotel lodging tax



*DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE INITIATIVES*  
*CONTINUED*

**Permits**

- DOR waived bond requirements and issued temporary permits for importation of fuel
- DOR is also attempting to streamline the nonresident contractor registration program

**Relief**

- DOR is promoting the "Sales Tax Refund on Personal Property"
- DOR designed and printed booklet with instructions and applications for distribution at various evacuee sites

**Litigation**

- DOR is working with opposing counsels whose offices were displaced to accommodate requests for joint continuances and motions with Board of Tax Appeals and other courts
- DOR is providing agency attorneys for notarial service needs by evacuees

**Policy**

- DOR has expedited the policy-making process on issues arising because of storm
  - Resulted in two emergency rules, several informational bulletins, and an informal opinion

**Communication**

- DOR established a Web page for access to state tax information related to Hurricane Katrina
  - This included the emergency rules, information bulletins, LDR press releases, related frequently asked questions, personal property sales tax refund, and a link to the LA Disaster Recovery Foundation. Additionally, to facilitate a one-stop-shop for practitioners, IRS hurricane-related press releases were also included

**REBUILDING LOUISIANA**

*DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES*

**LA Swift**

- DOTD played a major role in developing, organizing and marketing the "LA Swift" bus program that gives a free bus ride to displaced New Orleans citizens now living in the Baton Rouge area
  - More importantly, displaced job seekers are finding jobs in the New Orleans, and employers are finding workers
  - This helps jump start the economy, which is crucial for the revitalization and repopulation of the area
  - As of November 8, more than **2,350** LA Swift commuters have been transported – on free buses- to and from New Orleans for jobs, job searches and recovery efforts

**"Fast-track" Construction**

- DOTD used a "fast-track" construction technique to complete repairs to one span of the I-10 Twin Span Bridge in 27 days, thus allowing residents of the Northshore to return to their jobs in New Orleans and allowing interstate traffic to move through New Orleans again
  - Not only did DOTD finish the job early (projected time to finish, even on a 24-7 schedule, was 45 days), the agency was able to bid the work out and save about \$20 million over its original estimate
  - By completing the work early, DOTD also was able to more quickly devote resources to repairing the second span of the bridge, which is scheduled for completion in mid-January
  - By letting the work out for bid and saving \$20 million, DOTD also sent a strong message that Gov. Blanco intends to rebuild the New Orleans area in an open and efficient manner

*DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES*  
*CONTINUED*

**Customer Service Center**

- As a direct result of the hurricanes, DOTD established a Customer Service Center within the communications office
- Trained representatives are available seven days a week to answer calls from evacuees, travelers, companies looking to do business with the state and even from people who needed to be rescued in the early days following Katrina
- The service has only one full-time employee and utilizes student workers who are trained to handle public inquiries. The service also has been indispensable in disseminating information to the public about LA Swift. DOTD's Customer Service Center is averaging about 200 calls a day just on the LA Swift service

**Repairing Breach Levees**

- DOTD played a major supporting role in helping the US Army Corps of Engineers repair the breached levees
  - DOTD engineer Mike Stack was among the first to respond to the breach, and he and his crew conceived of, helped develop and implement a plan to quickly build a road from the 17th Street Canal Bridge to the breach so heavy equipment could be taken directly to the site
  - This strategy, along with the helicopter drops, helped facilitate quicker repairs, thus mitigating some of the damage from the flood waters
  - DOTD also helped coordinate pumping efforts to "de-water" the city and provided engineering expertise and support in the Corps of Engineers' mission

**Assisting Local Governments**

- Many municipalities and parishes in south Louisiana remain unable to make badly needed repairs to roads and bridges that were ravaged during both hurricanes
  - DOTD has taken the lead role in assisting those governmental units and their citizens by contracting the repair work directly or, in some cases, using DOTD crews to make repairs
  - DOTD also has informed these towns and parishes that the agency will handle the federal reimbursement process, thus relieving these overburdened officials of bureaucratic red tape

**The "Louisiana Team"**

- DOTD has formed the "Louisiana Team," a group of expert scientists from LSU and the business community that is examining data from the levee breaches to ensure that all relevant information is considered before any final conclusions are reached
  - Secretary Bradberry believes it is of utmost importance that the state has a presence and a voice in the process of investigating how and why the levees breached so that ultimate repairs and upgrades are based on scientific data, not preconceived ideas supported by a selective pool of information

## **REBUILDING LOUISIANA**

### *DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INITIATIVES*

#### **Comprehensive Debris Management**

- DEQ has implemented and is carrying out a comprehensive debris management plan to deal with more than 22 million tons of debris generated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
  - This figure includes more than 200,000 homes.
  - More than 1.5 million home appliances will be recycled along with approximately 350,000 vehicles and 50,000 boats
  - Dozens of staging areas have been set up in areas to store debris such as white goods (refrigerators, washer/dryers and stoves), cars, boats and other hurricane-related debris until the materials can be properly handled and disposed of
  - DEQ, EPA and local officials have worked together to collect more than 25,000 white goods and one-million pounds of household hazardous waste

#### **Following Strict Protocols**

- DEQ is following a strict protocol during this process.
  - For example, each of the estimated 350,000 vehicles in the Katrina area will be picked up and taken to staging areas
  - Once there, the fluids will have to be drained, Freon unit and mercury switch will be removed before the vehicle can be recycled or scrapped
  - DEQ's debris plan will ensure that no environmental hazard is created while the agency manages one of the nation's largest environmental disasters of all time

#### **Sampling Water, Air & Sediments**

- Water Sampling
  - More than 500 water samples were taken of flood waters, canals, bayous, estuaries as well as Lake Pontchartrain
  - After conducting tens of thousands of analyses, data indicates that the Lake did not suffer any ill effects.
  - Bio-toxicity tests showed floodwaters pumped into Lake Pontchartrain were not toxic
  - DEQ and Food and Drug Administration will soon have aquatic life-tissue sample results from the lake after conducting extensive sampling for species people are more likely to eat, such as shrimp, crabs and certain finfish
  - Marine life tested along coastal Louisiana did not harbor E. coli
  - DEQ has results from dozens of air-canister samples and the data shows there are no chemicals of concern
- Air Sampling
  - DEQ is managing ambient air monitoring sites in Kenner, Hahnville, Garyville and Marrero
  - None of these sites have recorded violations of federal or state ambient air standards
- Sediment Sampling
  - More than 430 sediment samples were conducted in Jefferson, Orleans and St. Bernard Parishes after removal of flood waters
  - Samples were analyzed for approximately 190 different chemical compounds
  - Levels of metal and pesticides detected were below levels of concern
  - Thick layers of sediments throughout the area are to be removed and disposed of
  - DEQ issued an emergency declaration providing regulatory relief for emergency response and cleanup activities

**REBUILDING LOUISIANA**  
*DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES INITIATIVES*

**Integrating Coastal Restoration & Hurricane Protection**

- DNR will integrate the present Coastal Restoration Program with a comprehensive program that includes Hurricane Protection for the state of Louisiana and its citizens
  - This new program is intended to be long-range to ensure the safety and sustainability of our communities and our economy
  - Oversight and authority for such a program would reside within the Department of Natural Resources
  - To accomplish this task, certain functions and operations of the DOTD would be restructured and an entire re-organization plan would be considered
  - Hurricane protection, which is key to this plan, is to be developed in conjunction with federal agencies, levee districts, and local government

**Crisis Advisory Council**

- DNR will create an advisory council that consists of Oil and Gas industry representatives who will provide input and feedback to improve working relationships in the event of "crisis"
- The council will also provide insight and advice on matters that deal with supply and demand of energy, pipeline conditions, repair and safety, and how energy products can be moved effectively when faced with crisis and emergency situations

**Office of Conservation**

- The Office of Conservation should consider all avenues before making exceptions to oil and gas regulations
- Special waivers and reduced paperwork will help to restore oil and gas operations (production) that may have been impacted, damaged, or curtailed as a result of storms that affected facilities and/or obstructed infrastructure

**Offices of Mineral Resources and Conservation**

- The Offices of Mineral Resources & Conservation must come together to assist industry to remain functional and viable in times of emergency
- Certain special authorities and rights should be considered like that of "executive orders" that allow the department secretary and the commissioner to act in the best interest of the state both for economic and sound environmental reasons

**REBUILDING LOUISIANA**  
*DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS INITIATIVES*

**Inmate Housing and Care**

- While it is quite common for the Department of Corrections (DOC) to provide assistance with evacuation and housing of inmates during emergency situations, never has the Department had to coordinate such a massive effort as it has in the post-Katrina/Rita world.
  - At the height of activity, approximately 10,500 inmate evacuees were being cared for in state and local institutions
  - While virtually all of the Rita inmate evacuees have returned, the challenge remains to work at getting both Jefferson and Orleans Parish Prison facilities operational again
  - The DOC is planning for a long-term housing assignment for Orleans Parish inmate evacuees
  - Corrections Services is currently coordinating the housing of more than 5,700 inmates

*DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS INITIATIVES*  
*CONTINUED*

**Assistance in the Recovery of the Judicial System in Katrina-Ravaged Areas**

- Elayn Hunt Correctional Center supported 72-hour hearings for post-Katrina arrestees from Orleans and other parishes
  - Corrections Services has worked tirelessly and is still working with the Louisiana Attorney General's Office, District Attorneys Offices, defense attorneys and criminal court judges to coordinate the release of inmates from all storm-affected parishes (those that can be released)
  - DOC initiatives always put public safety first, while trying to assist releasing offenders or detainees who have nothing to go back to

**Site Preparation and Maintenance for Temporary Interment of Storm Victims**

- Corrections Services is awaiting plans for a temporary (perhaps final in some cases) burial site for victims of Hurricane Katrina.
  - Inmate work crews will be responsible for site preparation and maintenance.

**Employee Support and Response**

- The Department continues to disperse monetary funds to employees who suffered significant losses as a result of both Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
  - The donations have come from correctional systems and agencies all over the United States

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